

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

March 2016

Dealing with Denial and the Disease of Alcoholism

Carrying the recovery message to the new person or the still addicted alcoholic in rehabs and detoxes is exhilarating. Trying to bring that same message to someone close to one of us who is sick and suffering is a long and drawn out chore. More mental strain than physical but both for sure. The rehabs/detoxes and prisons/psych wards bring out the hopeful and encouraging side of us. We want the suffering to feel better. We want them to find the solution, to seek a higher power.

We want them to experience the happiness of sobriety. We want them to discover that life goes on without getting "tight".



We want all that, but, just like the wonderful people working in recovery centers, when we live with the problem we find they

don't get it. Surprise! The stark face of the disease. First, the denial, then, all the lies and deception and stealing and jails, institutions and death. How dare they! As if they are doing these things on purpose- to us- the ones who love them and want to help them.

And then we are in denial about their problem and our ability to help. We start getting annoyed

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April in March: A Super Bowl Party That Kept it Green

I got sober when I was 27. I am 33 now and still learning how to "survive" a variety of experiences and events as a young woman—who no longer drinks—in a world that does.

I've shared before that I genuinely enjoy sports. And, I still love a party! Who doesn't love an excuse to eat unhealthy food and catch up with friends and family on an otherwise uneventful Sunday night with football on in the background?

My brother invited some of his friends, my parents, and my boyfriend and I over to his place to watch the game and eat crockpots full of melted cheese. My kind of event! My sobriety is solid and a family party no longer makes me wish I were throwing back drinks and being inappropriate. I happily drink my diet soda and can laugh and cheer with the best of them

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Jersey Goes to LA

Louisiana, that is, specifically Baton Rouge, and yes, the timing of my business trip paralleled Mardi Gras about an hour away in New Orleans. I've been thru New Orleans in the past and know for myself I have no business being there during the festivities. There is no "gray area" here for me; just stay away.

What I enjoy most about the area is the food, and there were no disappointments this trip. The combination of fresh shrimp, oysters, crawfish, alligator and Cajun seasonings makes everything back home taste like plain white toast!

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April in March

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My brother and his friends had been drinking before we arrived and this didn't faze me. My bro was jolly and glad to see us, but one of his childhood friends was already 3 sheets to the wind when we got there. This friend has had known issues and periods of being clean, but thinks his issues are limited to drugs and doesn't totally recognize that alcohol is also an issue. Now I am not here to take his inventory. But being around him brought me right back to who I was five and a half years ago.

Before anyone else started drinking in the afternoon, my brother's friend hit the hard liquor. He drank the entire bottle before 6 p.m. (What an April move! Though I probably would have started in the morning.) He was loud and goofy when we arrived, and promptly passed out before kickoff—



even while wearing a Manning jersey—as this was his favorite team in the big game. He snored his way through half time and when he did wake up, was incoherent and then belligerent and loud. But where my boyfriend and brother were annoyed at this friend for his intrusion in our evening, my heart broke.

I remember what it was like to think I was a fun time after drinking far more than I should. I remember being at events where everyone had socially been drinking (or not drinking at all!) and I was the one where my friends and family were apologizing on my behalf. I remember honestly thinking that I had my drinking under control and that everyone loved who I was. I remember thinking that any activity or event (or quiet contemplation) needed alcohol to be worth my time.

On the drive home, my boyfriend made a comment about how awful my brother's friend

was that night. And yes, I agreed. When he woke up he was cursing and yelling and getting on everyone's nerves. But I also had the empathy that only we can have. I could see through his initial drunken slurs and eventual obnoxious behavior and know the pain he is in. The pain that only we can understand. I can't expect anyone else at that party to understand. They are all the lucky ones who can drink and never know the pain that is addiction. And even luckier than them is me. The one who came out on the other side of that pain.

It isn't my job to do more than extend my hand to my brother's friend. He has to want sobriety and I can't force that. But that party was a reminder of who I was, who I could be again if I don't take this disease seriously, and how grateful I am for who I am today. That party kept it green for me and I am grateful for these moments to truly reflect on my journey and send up a prayer for those still sick and suffering.

April E.



As Bill Sees It: A Full and Thankful Heart, p. 37

"I try hard to hold fast to the truth that a full and thankful heart cannot entertain great conceits. When brimming with gratitude, one's heartbeat must surely result in outgoing love, the finest emotion that we can ever know."

Step Three: The First of the Big Action Steps



"Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him."

After spending time reflecting on how we've come to this pretty pass in life (jail, messed up personal lives, financial difficulties), we come to Step Three. The first of the Big Action Steps. It seems pretty daunting, especially if faith in a higher power has been weakened through years of hard living and self-

pity. We believe in some weird way that we are the center of the universe—even if we spend our time getting knocked around in that universe, things are always happening to us. We aren't responsible for what happens. We're victims, and boy, if there is a God he has a real sense of humor, eh? The Third Step, to me, is about letting all of that selfishness go, and just asking for help.

In Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Bill W. writes about the Third Step, "Practicing Step Three is like the opening of a door which to all appearances is still closed and locked. All we need is a key, and the decision to swing the door open. There is only one key, and it is called willingness."

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Gratitude (A recovery poem from Courtney K.)

*I am grateful for so many things
For the birds outside and their feathery wings
And the tweeting way they love to sing
For central heat and air conditioning.*

*I am grateful for my family and friends,
I'm grateful for beginnings, I'm grateful for ends,
I'm grateful for baths – the ultimate cleanse,
Fresh notebooks, and big bold black inky pens.*

*I'm grateful for flowers and big achoo sneezes
I'm grateful for tomato soup and fresh hot grilled
cheeses
Autumn and spring and nice summer breezes
Winter and snow and icicle freezes.*

*I'm grateful for food and grateful for drinks,
I'm grateful for the way my crazy mind thinks
And for puppies and bunnies and kitty cat winks
For birthdays and play dates and ice skating rinks.*

*I'm grateful for my big comfy bed,
And for the wisdom of what that person just said,
For eyelashes and eyebrows and the hair on my
head,
For all of the colors from purple to red.*

*I'm grateful for sunshine, I'm grateful for rain,
I'm grateful for comfort, I'm grateful for pain,
For checkers and cards and that fun drawing game,
For poems and stories, for my birth-given name.*

*I'm grateful for light, I'm grateful for love
I'm grateful for each of the stars up above
And mittens and scarves and the fingerless glove
I'm grateful for all the great stuff I'm made of.*

*For patios and decks and smooth sliding doors
For cars and trucks and cute-corner stores
For shooting stars as across the sky they soar
So tell me, friend, what are you grateful for?*

Denial

(Continued from page 1)

or angry. "I am sober, what's wrong with them? Why can't they get it?" And we start to judge from our higher plane—most of us anyway. The patience goes away, and the resignation comes in. I can't help them, they are their own worst enemy; I am done.

For me, the yin and yang of this kind of 12th step experience with those close to me drives me to judge the still-sick person. After all I have seen on this journey, I know that cannot be helped. It's very



natural but wrong—as I have been taught. I pick my spots to move back in and try again. I must. How could I fulfill AAs primary purpose otherwise? Thanks for letting me share.

Anonymous

Red Lion Group Medford Lakes

The first Surgeon General of the United States and a signer of the Declaration of Independence, Benjamin Rush declared drinking to become intoxicated a disease in 1799. That declaration was not officially adopted.

Step Three

(Continued from page 3)

This is so simple, and yet so hard for many of us (this AA included). I think too many of us get caught up in debating the "God thing" at first—but from what I've seen, we all eventually come around to the idea of a Higher Power. Someone or something that we can turn to and say, help me through this, ok? But you don't need to have that all figured out the first time you think about the Third Step.

I'd always kind of believed in God—I was raised in a Christian faith and like most kids, went through the motions of confirmation classes, etc., but I don't think I stepped inside a church before I got sober for about 20 years. Unless, of course, I was attending someone's wed-

ding—and that was just a stopping point to the reception and oblivion.

I had a friend who for years who would say to me, "Why don't you pray about it?" when I was having trouble, and I am sure I looked at him like he had three heads. I don't know if he's a member of the fellowship, but he was giving me good advice and I just wasn't taking it. Selfish. I can handle this. No one can help me but ME. (Needless to say, that was not a good plan!)

I think I was so desperate when I came to AA that I WAS willing to try anything. And there's the key—willingness. I was willing to try asking for help. I was willing to try saying the Third Step prayer, even if I felt a little silly at first. I was willing to listen to people with good sobriety tell

me how they did it every day, and I was willing to listen to my sponsor. (One of her little sayings about the Third Step and letting go was, "You can't heal a sick mind with a sick mind.")

I do pray to a Higher Power now, and that is Someone that I call God. It's just easier for me that way. But my God isn't like your God, or anyone else's God, and that's the beauty of this step. It's God as I understand Him (or Her, as the case may be). No one in these rooms has ever tried to tell me who I should pray to or how to do it. This is your own decision. So my advice is to let go—ask for help—and have an open mind. A serenity you've never experienced is about to begin!

--Patty H.

Editorial Policy

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Contributions from readers are encouraged—you can write about your experience, strength and hope in general, or you can focus on one of the steps or traditions. You can also write about something that touched you at a meeting, something that bothered you at a meeting, or some service commitment you especially enjoy. Submissions are edited for space and clarity. Contact information is required and anonymity is respected.

Due to space limitations, we are unable to publish flyers for events in this newsletter. However, we are happy to include your gathering in the general list of fellowship announcements.

Please send your submissions to newsletter@aasj.org.

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SJIG holds its monthly meetings on the third Wednesday of the month at 8 pm at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church 1989 Route 70 East, Cherry Hill, NJ

Jersey in LA

(From page 1)

Travelling for work can make it easy to find excuses for not attending meetings – flight delays, unknown cities, not having my familiar meeting list are some of the excuses I've used. It's best for me to get to a meeting as early as possible during the trip. Getting over that hurdle helps me lose any anxiety over finding a meeting.

It took less than five minutes to navigate the Baton Rouge area's website via smart phone and find the Perkins Group less than four miles from my hotel. The discussion group was run very similar to our local meetings and a few members recalled their past Mardi Gras transgressions which we all enjoyed. The group warmly welcomed another visitor along with myself, and we enjoyed the fellowship after the meeting, realizing we were all friends who just hadn't met yet. I had the pleasure of talking to a group member who recently retired from the industry that keeps me busy.

The rest of my trip, I felt a little less like a stranger and more like a part of Baton Rouge's AA community. Now, if I can only remember this feeling on my next trip when I'm making excuses for staying in the hotel!

Shawn

Find A Helping Hand

Whenever you're ready to join, AA is there with a hand held out



Alcoholics Anonymous
South Jersey Intergroup
24/7 Hotline
856-486-4444

Fellowship Announcements and Things to Do

March 2016

Monday February 29 - Mullica Hill "Language of the Heart" meeting will celebrate their three-year anniversary. Coffee & desserts at 6:30 pm followed by great speaker at 7:00 p.m. Trinity United Methodist Ch. 284 Cedar Rd., Mullica Hill. For more info call Kristen O.: 856-725-3620.

Saturday, March 5, 2016 - Sober Saturday Group 7th Anniversary. Speaker meeting followed by a Fellowship Brunch at 9:00 am, First Presbyterian Church of Maurice River, 119 North Second Street Second & Pine Streets, Millville, NJ. A Continental Breakfast will be provided. Food dishes and snacks are welcome. For more information contact: Greg C. (856) 238-8488 or ghc01@comcast.net

Friday-Sunday, June 24-26 - 5th Liberty Bell Roundup, Philadelphia Woodstock of AA. Registration: \$40.

Spirituality on the Go!

In our busy lives, we are always on the move: Eating while we drive; answering email on the bus; sending text messages while waiting at the doctor's office. Well, here's a little spirituality to take with you for when you need a little help from your higher power. And who among us doesn't need that?

Clip out these A.A. prayers to keep in your purse or wallet, or copy and paste them into your smart phone. Chances are, they will come in handy.

SEVENTH STEP PRAYER

MY CREATOR, I AM NOW WILLING
THAT YOU SHOULD HAVE ALL OF ME,
GOOD & BAD. I PRAY THAT YOU
NOW REMOVE FROM ME EVERY SINGLE
DEFECT OF CHARACTER WHICH STANDS
IN THE WAY OF MY USEFULNESS TO
YOU & MY FELLOWS. GRANT ME
STRENGTH, AS I GO OUT FROM HERE
TO DO YOUR BIDDING.

THIRD STEP PRAYER

GOD, I OFFER MYSELF TO THEE — TO
BUILD WITH ME AND TO DO WITH ME
AS THOU WILT. RELIEVE ME OF THE
BONDAGE OF SELF, THAT I MAY BET-
TER DO THY WILL. TAKE AWAY MY
DIFFICULTIES, THAT VICTORY OVER
THEM MAY BEAR WITNESS TO THOSE I
WOULD HELP OF THY POWER, THY
LOVE, AND THY WAY OF LIFE. MAY I
DO THY WILL ALWAYS!